

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

The following is a complete listing of claims in this application.

Claims 1-10 (canceled).

11. (currently amended) In an orthodontic ~~application~~ appliance adapted to be disposed in the mouth of a patient, comprising ~~a bracket system surrounding~~ a molar tube, ~~with~~ and an ~~arch~~ archwire having an end projecting from a distal end of ~~a~~ the molar tube, the improvement comprising an oral mucous membrane protector comprising:

a protective element constructed and arranged to cover or envelop the end of the ~~arch~~ archwire; and

a fixing element integrally joined to and extending from the protective element and fixed around ~~to the bracket system surrounding~~ the molar tube to secure the protective element over the archwire ~~behind flaps thereof at the height of the arch,~~

the protector isolating mucous membranes susceptible of being damaged inside the mouth, and preventing disengagement of the archwire from the molar tube.

12. (currently amended) An ~~application~~ appliance according to claim 11, wherein the protective element is a cap ~~constructed and arranged for covering the end of the arch~~ having a closed end and an open end surrounded by a wall, the end of the archwire being received in the open end, and the fixing means comprises an elastic ring integral with and extending from the wall ~~protective element in a direction~~ opposite to the closed end.

13. (currently amended) An ~~application~~ appliance according to claim 11, wherein the protective element is made of a synthetic, elastic, impermeable and soft material.

14. (currently amended) A ~~application~~ appliance according to claim 13, wherein the protective element is made of a

silicone or solid gel.

15. (currently amended) An ~~application~~ appliance according to claim 12, wherein ~~the cap has a closed end, and~~ an internal reinforcement of the cap is provided at the closed end.

16. (currently amended) An ~~application~~ appliance according to claim 15, wherein the internal reinforcement is made of the same material as the cap.

17. (new) In an orthodontic appliance adapted to be disposed in the mouth of a patient, comprising a molar tube, and an archwire having an end projecting from a distal end of the molar tube, the improvement comprising an oral mucous membrane protector comprising:

a cap having a closed end and an open end surrounded by a wall, the end of the archwire being received in the open end, and

an elastic ring integral with and extending from the wall in a direction opposite to the closed end and fixed around the molar tube to secure the cap over the archwire, the elastic ring extending over a portion of the wall limited such that the elastic ring does not extend over the open end of the cap.

the protector isolating mucous membranes susceptible of being damaged inside the mouth, and preventing disengagement of the archwire from the molar tube.

18. (new) An appliance according to claim 17, wherein the protective element is made of a synthetic, elastic, impermeable and soft material.

19. (new) A appliance according to claim 17, wherein the cap is made of a silicone or solid gel.

20. (new) An appliance according to claim 17, wherein an internal reinforcement of the cap is provided at the closed end.

21. (new) An appliance according to claim 20, wherein the

internal reinforcement is made of the same material as the cap.

22. (new) An oral mucous membrane protector comprising for securing and covering an end of an archwire projecting from a molar tube in an orthodontic appliance, comprising:

a cap having a closed end and an open end surrounded by a wall, the end of the archwire being receivable in the open end, and

an elastic ring integral with and extending from the wall in a direction opposite to the closed end and being constructed and arranged to be fixed around the molar tube to secure the cap over the archwire, the elastic ring extending over a portion of the wall limited such that the elastic ring does not extend over the open end of the cap.

the protector isolating mucous membranes susceptible of being damaged inside the mouth, and preventing disengagement of the archwire from the molar tube.

23. (new) An appliance according to claim 22, wherein the protective element is made of a synthetic, elastic, impermeable and soft material.

24. (new) A appliance according to claim 23, wherein the cap is made of a silicone or solid gel.

25. (new) An appliance according to claim 22, wherein an internal reinforcement of the cap is provided at the closed end.

26. (new) An appliance according to claim 25, wherein the internal reinforcement is made of the same material as the cap.